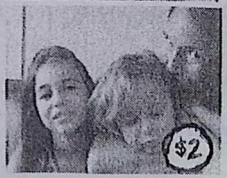
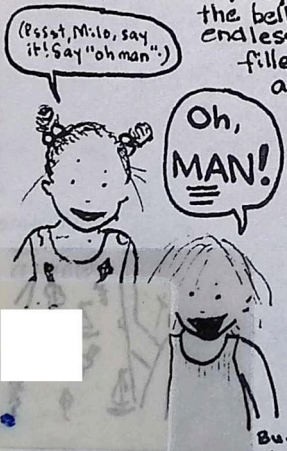
the east village

INKY

28

in which a 40-year-old New-Hoos-Yorker, a tri-thumbed, 8-year-old bronze medalist & a [illegible] below most minimum-height requirements 5-year old who mercifully still gets a bang out of clanging the bells on those kiddie-sized boats endlessly circling in a cement tub filled with a couple of feet of water, add another summer's worth of Coney Island to their formative memories





PLUS

- SHRIMP ALLERGY REPEALED!
- THE WORLD'S BEST BUCKET ANECDOTE!
- MERMAIDS ON PARADE!
- A BABY EMERGING FROM SOMEONE ELSE'S BODY FOR A CHANGE!
- CARYATIDS IN SPORTSWEAR!

Buy this magazine for TWO DOLLARS and I'm still 3 bucks shy of fighting off a teenager for the front seat of the Cyclone.

AUGUST 2005

the east village INKY is published four times a year, greatly depleting the nation's White-Out Reserves.

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autographed copies of my books
The Big Rumpus
No Touch Monkey!
& Job Hopper
are yours for 15 bucks each. (& I reach you via media mail)

DARE TO BE A NIEMS

tell Inky if you've got to move it, move it because returned mail costs us stamps & sleep.

The East Village INKY

Welcome to the WORLD

Haskell Ace Harelik

July 14 2005
3:24pm
NYC

CONEY ISLAND

As a landlocked Hoosier youth, I had a fascination for the place, thanks to a book I'd picked up who knows where ~ a library sale most likely ~ about this kid named Ari who kept running off to meet his friend, Moxie, on the boardwalk, though he also spent a fair amount of time just hanging around on his stoop, wearing a yamulke (my first Hebrew word!) drinking cream soda, & chatting up the nutsy old ladies who acted like they owned the whole block. Gosh I wish I remembered the title of that book so I could force Inky to read it. I've already introduced her to All of a Kind Family, a series which I compulsively checked out of the Nora Branch Library, about a Jewish family living in a Lower East Side tenement at the turn of the century.

← LOOK! They took the streetcar to Coney Island! Perched high up in the next door neighbors' walnut tree with my latest stash of reading material, I was a long way from conceiving that one day I might consider it not the biggest deal in the world to take the subway to Coney Island ... in a mermaid tail & a bra trimmed in faux-kelp. More on that later.

Because Greg is one of those rare creatures who was actually reared in Cape Cod (unlike a kid from N.Y.C. he knew who merely summered down the road, torturing the native pond life & bull whipping Greg's brother.) (who grew up - the kid, not Greg's brother - to direct a great dark comedy about sado-masochism!) (I'm not sayin', I'm just sayin', you know?) (and this kid named his production company after the pond on his grandparent's property... whereas Greg who LIVED a la Cod year round... named our production company (which lasted all of one production) Theatre of the Apes.)

Anyway... because of Greg's unusual relationship to this fabled summer recreation spot, I have capped to outlaw status for the month of July, restricting my family from all but the most marginal participation in the de rigeur tourist activities. It's obnoxious. We can feel attached to a certain pond but cannot take a bunch of inflatable toys and sporty things to throw at each other there... we can consider the fried clams at Moby Dick's superior to other options but that doesn't mean they're worth waiting in line over an hour for & (I should probably stress that the opinions expressed by this writer in.

...et's have lunch at J's! Then tonight we can grill burgers ...p to the 'Nice Cream ...p' before driving ... Duck Harper for ...e sunset!
Sound great, honey! Tomorrow we can rent kayaks & go to the square dance on the Pier!
Can we watch T.V?
sure!
oo, hone let's be sure to take a photo of the kids for our Xmas card
Thank you for buying us to each towels & sand toys, Mommy!
Wellfleet Oysters
LOOK AT ALL THE FUN WE COULD HAVE IF I WAS REGULAR INSTEAD OF SO WILLFULLY BOHEMIAN & UPPITY!

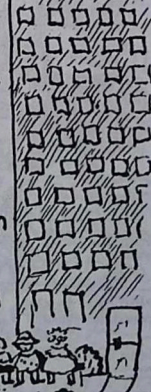
how Well do you know your Cape Cod Kettle ponds?

- Gull Pond
- Williams Pond
- Higgins Pond
- Long Pond
- Slough Pond
- Horseleech Pond
- Theatre of the Apes Pond
- Herring Pond
- Great Pond
- Salt Pond

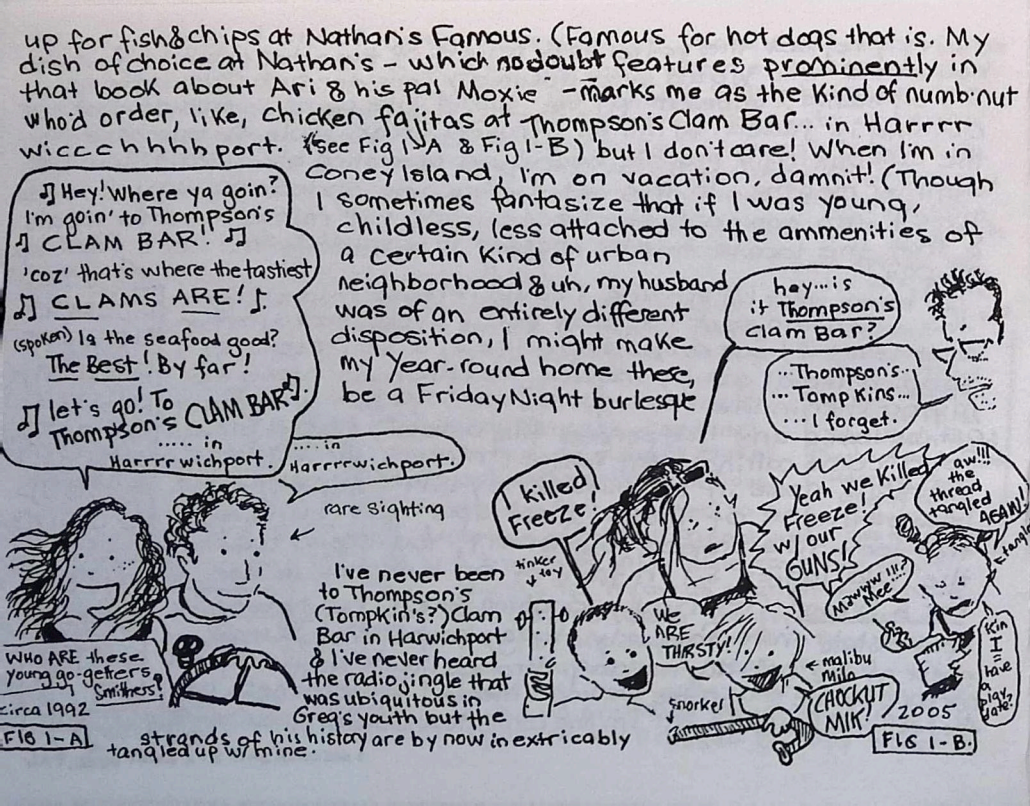
FIND THE IMPOSTER!

no way reflect the policies & beliefs of the other adult half of the household who would most assuredly consider such calculations schizophrenic & unbecoming) we should take pains to ensure that our clothing is faded, wrinkled & frayed, unavailable for purchase in the off-puttingly preppie boutiques operating along Main St. in the summer months. In this not-particularly-endearing way, I delude myself into hoping that the tourists will mistake us for locals & that the locals might attempt to misidentify me as a teenage au pair.

So here's what I'm thinking. I could release myself from this vacation spot identity crisis cycle, not to mention an at least 12-hour round-trip drive in a self-respect-sapping rental car by leaving the childhood home to my brother-in-law (he's got a 7-year old son who could out-bullwhip any independent film director should Slough Pond come calling) & the summer renters and buy a weekend home in beautiful Coney Island, New York! Maybe in one of those giant apartment buildings that look like projects but aren't, you know, the ones the old ladies sit in front of on benches in Requiem For A Dream? (technically Brighton Beach, but New York real estate has famously fudgy boundaries.) I may sneer at the holiday making throngs lining up for the fried garbage of the sea in the well-documented gorgeousness of the National Seashore but I'm one contented bovine queuing

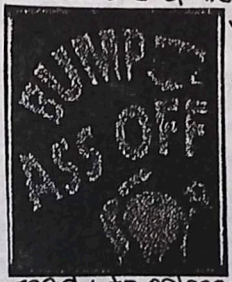


up for fish & chips at Nathan's Famous. (Famous for hot dogs that is. My dish of choice at Nathan's - which no doubt features prominently in that book about Ari & his pal Moxie - marks me as the kind of numb-nut who'd order, like, chicken fajitas at Thompson's Clam Bar... in Harrrr wiccchhhhport. (see Fig 1-A & Fig 1-B) but I don't care! When I'm in Coney Island, I'm on vacation, damnit! (Though I sometimes fantasize that if I was young, childless, less attached to the ammenities of a certain kind of urban neighborhood & uh, my husband was of an entirely different disposition, I might make my year-round home there, be a Friday Night burlesque



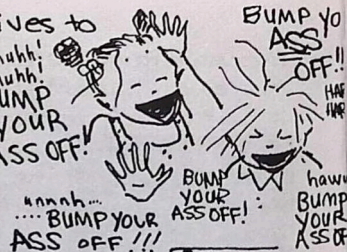
I've never been to Thompson's (Tompkin's?) Clam Bar in Harwichport & I've never heard the radio jingle that was ubiquitous in Greg's youth but the strands of his history are by now inextricably tangled up w/ mine.

Mermaid Parade Dreamtime Artists Club Sideshows by the Sea in with the in crowd insider!) (not the Requiem For A Dream version) Nathan's is but one of the must-do's on my tourist itinerary. For instance, no visit to Coney is complete without a pilgrimage to the bumper car concession on Surf Ave, just down from Stillwell, the last stop on the F train. I don't think I've been inside a bumper car since I was a poor excuse for an adolescent, unsure of how to make the infernal thing go... (WHoa! deja vu. I've written about this in these pages before. Oh well, why waste white-out? See Fig 1.C.) ... and I'm not quite ready to release my precious babies, who may well have inherited their mother's helplessness behind the wheel, onto an ear-splitting (rock music!), seizure-inducing (disco lights!), profanity spewing (why travel 19 stops on the F train when you can hear the same melon farming, crack ducking shipoopie by pressing your ear between the childguards of your own cone licking bedroom window, Butch?) collision course, but I do hold in very high regard this concession's sign, which bears the immortal legend BUMP YOUR ASS OFF! I was kind of immoderate in displaying my appreciation the first time I clapped eyes on this enchanting slogan - which embodies all that we hold dear about Coney Island - so much so that Inky & Milo found themselves in hot water with



can't get this thing to go. What am I doing wrong? What am I doing wrong? Act like you've having fun? Is it broken? Go! Wish I had the purple one...
from evil ex-bf
BOOM
WH
2
5
Fig 1-C

their old man for ignoring our repeated directives to simmer down & eat their dinner. (See Fig 1-D)



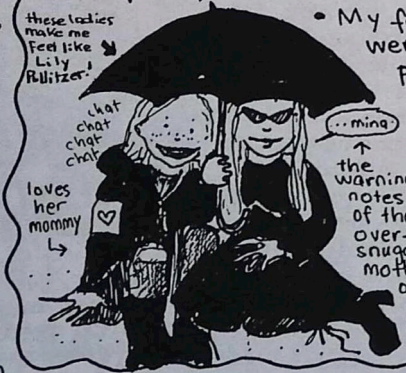
3 hours later

FIG 1-D

Other Tourist MUST DOs

- Must establish that each child gets to go on 2 rides. Understand? 2 & then we leave.
- Must admire the Wonder Wheel from the beach.
- Must mourn the ivy-covered iron Thunderbolt that was torn down shortly after we moved to NYC, to make way for the baseball stadium.
- Must swing by the batting cages & recount how Mrs X, wanting to bat like an unencumbered father (6 red) left her toddler w/ me & Inky & caught a fast ball in the thumb which bent backwards at a most sick making & unnatural angle. I'm still amazed it wasn't broken.
- Must praise the (not so) NEW (anymore) toilet pavilions as way better than the scary bog at Ruby's boardwalk bar.

I'm writing this at the tail end of an entire July spent in Cape Cod but already feel that I've logged a respectable amount of summer fun in the warm embrace of L'Isle de Cône'y & I'm looking forward to August, you better believe it. Some highlights:


these ladies make me feel like Lily Pulitzer!
chat chat chat chat
loves her mommy
..mina
the warning notes of the over-snuggled mother of a non-infant.

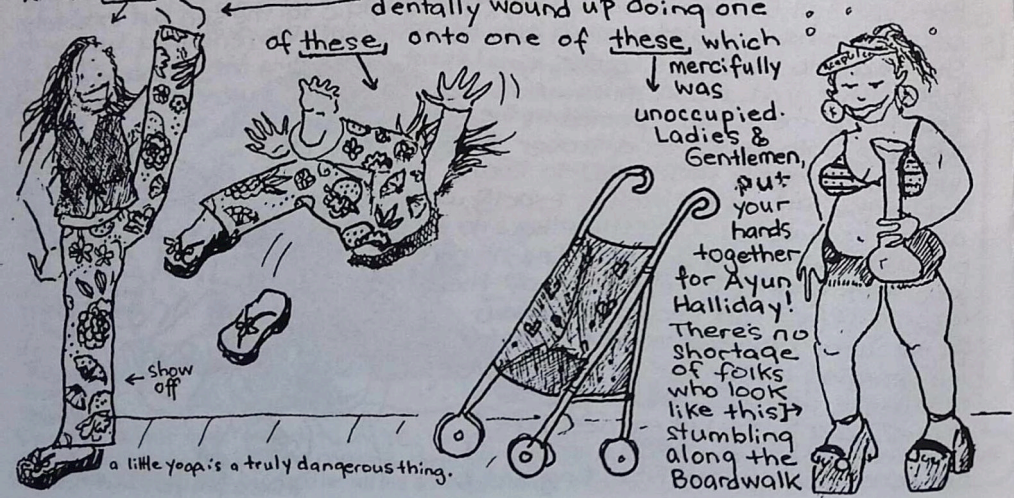
- My friend Bee & her kids were over from England pimping her new book & my kids were on one of those infernal days off that plague the New York City public school's calendar every year's end. Bee's teenage daughter, Mina, not only

shares her mother's predaliction for black clothing, she, too, is literally allergic to the sun. (And shrinks from the sign of the Cross & sleeps in a coffin! Tell everybody!) Like any broad-minded young lady with a thing for nationally renowned monuments & locations, she was nearly beside herself with joy to be making her first trip to C.I. This being the case, I selflessly volunteered to escort her on the Cyclone, so Bee could play nanny (as rendered by Edward Gorey) to my two, who had established one of those impossible-to-force, mysterious & instant kid connections to Bee's very tall 8-year-old son, Aubrey (Not allergic to the sun but extremely opposed to being joggled around, just like his Ma!) We endured but a short wait to board the coaster, time I spent instructing Miss Mina to tell her mother that her admission ticket, for which I was to be reimbursed, cost thrice the amount posted in the seller's window. We were both awed to discover that it looked like we were properly positioned to board the very 1st car in the line-up, which is exactly what we did after I delivered a gentle elbow to the solar plexus of some teenage male line-hoppers who were angling to deprive us of the great gift fate had chosen to bestow. As we were cranked up the first hill, we searched in vain for a black umbrella among the dot-sized beach apers & I expressed a silent but earnest hope* that the next day's headlines would not read Teen Visitor From England &

*like a prayer, but not

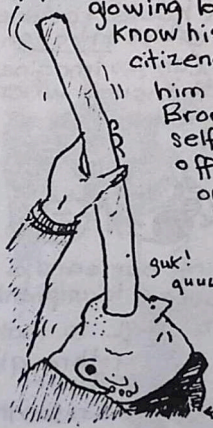
one other killed. In Tragic Safety Bar Malfunction. The ride itself was breath-taking, screamalicious fun & very, very joggly! Isn't there some dude who snagged a mention in The Guiness Book of World Records by riding The Cyclone consecutively for like 2 weeks, with only the most minimal time off to like, pee in a bottle & wolf down a couple of Nathan's Famous? That'd drive me stark raving bat meat! Nothing to read...

After the obligatory wait in Nathan's long line (during which I attempted to do this, but because that apparently isn't spectacle enough, accidentally wound up doing one of these onto one of these, which mercifully was unoccupied. Ladies & Gentlemen, put your hands together for Ayun Halliday! There's no shortage of folks who look like this stumbling along the Boardwalk

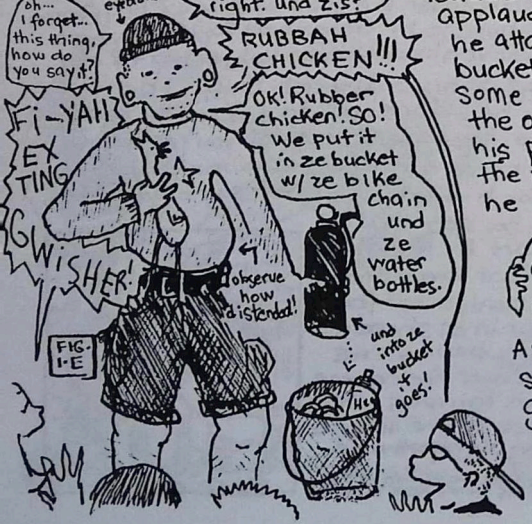


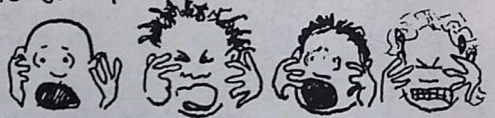
clutching fluorescent plastic pina colada tumblers shaped like boongs, oblivious to the bodacious sunburns they're developing, but not one of them would ever be so foolhardy & irresponsible as to recklessly endangers a baby stroller, which, it doesn't take a genius to figure out, is frequently synonymous with endangering a baby! No, for that it takes a mother of two well-documented children, in the company of the online editor of hipMama.

As if that weren't excitement enough, we then took the children to the Sideshow, where I fell completely under the spell of this visiting German freak. (I think he'd be gratified, not hurt, to be described so.) Forgive me if you're one of the 4000 or so who've already been subjected to my gowing blow-by-blow recap of his 3-part act. Sniff - I don't even know his name! And now he's gone, off to dazzle the good citizens of I forget where, somewhere South. If you run across him in your travels, tell him a respectable matron in Brooklyn is pining for his return. After some adorable, self-effacing patter, he got things off to a rousing start by inflating one of those five foot long cylindrical balloons more commonly used for twisting into animal shapes... AND THEN SWALLOWING THE WHOLE THING over the course of several torturous minutes while the adult females in the audience gagged in knowing sympathetic horror.



His abdomen now distended by the balloon, he popped the modern primitive plugs out of his stretched earlobes in preparation for Trick No. 2 - my personal favorite. The master of ceremonies (or 'Inside Talker' I would call him if I were a sideshow veteran instead of just some boob who learned the term on the Internet) fetched a couple of well-used metal buckets while our hero charmed the audience with more endearing, how-you-say-in-English chitchat (see fig 1-E). regarding the heavy but mundane items to be loaded into the buckets. With what I might applaud as a true showman's nonchalance, he attached steel cables to the now-full buckets handles, then, squatting down w/ some sickeningly thick hooks, fastened the other ends of the cables through his pierced earlobes - Can you imagine the pandemonium that ensued when he straightened his knees?


observe! no eyebrows
Ah! Fire Extinguisher, right. Und zis?
RUBBAH CHICKEN!!!
OK! Rubber chicken! So! We put it in ze bucket w/ ze bike chain und ze water bottles.
observe how distended!
und into ze bucket it goes!
Oh... I forget... this thing, how do you say it?
Fi-YAH!
EX TING G WISHER!
FIG. 1-E

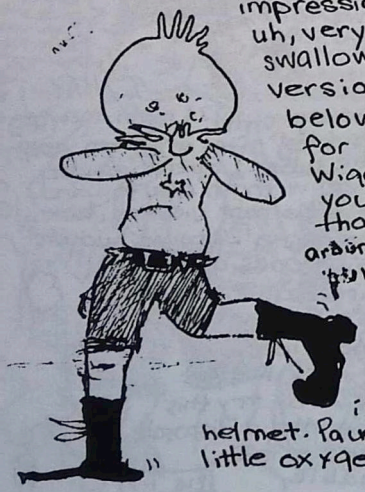


As we're all gripping our ears & screaming, he flashes a triumphant grin and STARTS TO TWIRL so that the buckets are sailing through the air on the end of their cables in a manner reminiscent

of a ride that was once a favorite of India & Milo's (& their mothers) that thing where little kids sit decorously on metal baby swings that look like they date back to the early 40's, as a motorized central pole turns in such a way that the little kids describe a gentle arc until the demoralized carnie (see Fig 1-F) decides they've had enough & punches a button. (Can we just reflect for a moment on the road that leads to that low wage shift? I mean, maybe it comes as a relief after umpteen years of fleecing the rubes & operating the big Ferris wheel with an eye toward prime female underpant viewing, but personally, I'd rather be swinging 20 pound buckets from my ears while the crowd goes apecity.) The people next to Bee left in disgust, but I thought I'd wet my pants. It's the sort of thing I live for. Don't tell Family Services. Nothing could ever top Act 2 but Act 3 came pretty close. (Kids: don't try this at home!) Insert one hand into a disposable glove (looked slightly sturdier than your average non-reusable

FIG 1-F

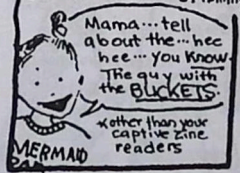
medical model, but perhaps that's because I associate them with the graceful lady-paws of examining midwives). Then wiggle the other hand all the way inside so that the palms touch & the appropriate fingers get paired off. Put your hands on your head & then laboriously stretch the glove over your crown like a skullcap or a bald skin wig. (Speaking of which, I suspect hair would prove a total liability, as far as this trick goes.) (which is probably why our German friend shaves his eyebrows) (one of the reasons, anyway) (I got the impression that most of the sideshow performers led, uh, very interesting nocturnal lives. I know the flame swallower, Insectavora, has an alternate adults-only version of her act which involves fire-eating below decks, as compelling a rationalization for Brazilian bikini waxing as I've yet heard.) Wiggle the glove down to cover the top half of your face. Get some mileage out of pretending that you can't see - walk off the stage, stumble around groping & crash into the audience. Now, pull the glove just a bit further, to cover your nostrils. Create a seal by pressing your pinkies along the hem and start to exhale forcefully & repetitively. (Remember, there's no inhaling at this point.) At this point, the glove is the size of an old fashioned deep sea diver's helmet. Pause (remember to conserve what precious little oxygen remains to you) then slowly, slowly, begin



to scratch your boots along the floorboards, jerking your enormous beachball of a head back on your now-comparatively scrawny neck like poultry hunting for grubs in the barnyard!

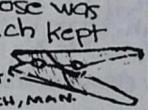
WHO ELSE MIGHT YOU SUBJECT TO A BLOW-BY-BLOW OF THIS GIFTED GERMAN'S SCHTICK?

- a memorial day picnic's worth of college friends.
- the nice people who provided a lot of wine at their dinner party.
- Anyone who ever uses the words 'Coney Island' within range of hearing.
- Educators & their parents escorting your son's Pre-K class on a trip to the Aquarium.
- Total strangers, apropos of nothing.



*other than your captive zine readers

SIMPLY MAGNIFICENT. Bump your ass off. Upon exiting, we noticed our hero on the block beside the 'Outside Talker' ("barker" to those of us less disposed to go rooting around in the nether reaches of the Internet like some deranged groupie-slash-raccoon), with squab knows how many wooden clothespins clamped onto his face, but frankly, that's just gross. Robbed of his enchanting gab, he could merely peer at us beseechingly with eyeballs over exposed by the disfiguring effects of the numerous homespun torture devices to which he had subjected himself. I could barely look at him. It was like seeing someone you love drunkenly soiling himself in public. Inky was singled out of the crowd to confirm that the Phillips head screwdriver the Human Blockhead was about to jam up his nose was the genuine article, which kept depression over seeing my idol laid low at bay, somewhat.



AND IF THEY LIKED THAT, THEY'RE SURE TO ENJOY

- the grisly blow-by-blow of what happened at Ruby Ridge, as gleaned from Them, a really great (& funny!) book about extremism nicked with permission from the temporary next-door neighbors
- a detailed summary of the one good chapter you've thus far managed to write for a book due in November.
- the scene from My Antonia (recently reread & declared even better) where the wolves eat the wedding party (but that's ALL I'm sayin'!)
- Comprehensive coverage of the 73rd annual MerMaid Parade (stay tuned)

One more word about the Sideshow, if I may. It only costs 5 clams to get in (3 if you're under 12) but they keep hitting you up for extra dough ~ if you want to steal a peek at how Madame Twisto contorts around the blades the Master of the Bally shoves into her wooden coffin, if you'd care to behold the collected wonders housed in two dusty display cases in the miniscule back hall, most notably the Fiji mermaid, who as far as I can tell, is the dried-out remains of a monkey stitched to the bottom half of a fish. Now, I'm a gal who will walk fifteen blocks to take advantage of the free transfer option to which every Metrocard user is entitled, who's never bought a Lottery ticket because it seems like throwing money down the Bouse House, who could only recently bring herself to upgrade her kids to first-hand shoes...

F. THAT ARIEL CRAP!

in the Show

WOULDN'T IT BE AWESOME IF THE LITTLE MERMAID LOOKED LIKE THIS!?

2nd runner up: the ghoulish, web-fingered mermaids, seemingly covered in snot, who hissed at Wendy in the most recent film version of Peter Pan.

So why do I get such a bang out of submitting to the brazen hucksterism of these sideshow revivalists?

I guess it's just another case of banishing dull care, the same desire to shirk the mantle that drives the biggest box office stars & world leaders to present their bare buttocks to the expertly wielded whips, canes & hairbrushes of (pre-operative transexual) dominatrix's. (see Fig1-G

LET IT BE SO ******>)

Yeah, that, but cheaper. I'm glad to fork it on over to the coffers of Coney Island USA.

Fig 1-G

But enough of this Freakishness! Let's away to the Inky had such a rip-roaring time on the sidelines in 2004 that, good mother that I am, I swore up & down that we could sign up to march next time. (Shoot, I also swore that I'd get her a gig to pass out Gatorade to the runners in this year's Marathon... better get on that.) Then, never content to leave well enough alone, a month or so before the event I suggested that maybe, in lieu of a traditional birthday party, she'd like to invite a few select cronies to march w/ us in the Mermaid Parade. We'd been considering a slumber party with 3 guests, which, judging from the hair in the snapshot (Fig 1-H) is how I celebrated my 8th birthday. The only thing is, we live in a barely 2-bedroom apartment, where both space & privacy are at a premium and, more importantly, my mother had hand-crocheted 4 pairs of red slippers with pom-poms on the toe as favors & that alone had me convinced that a slumber party for four was way more work than I could handle (especially since Greg was going to be out of town and I can't crochet) (it's a crying shame to have my limitations keep me out of the rampart & vastly appealing Stich N' Bitch movement. If any knitting coven in the Tri-Borough area is in search of a mascot who could maybe just Bitch N Eat, I'm there.) In retrospect, it would have been so easy, so non-psychotic, to trot down to one of those sprawling discount marts on Fulton Mall, pick up 4 pairs of slippers & maybe a storebought birthday cake for good measure. Instead, Good

FIG 1-H

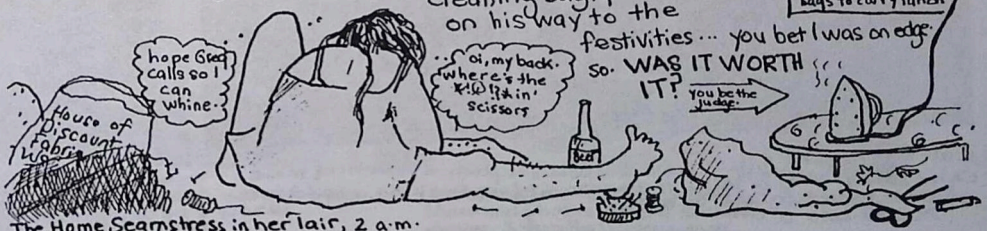
Mother spent the last 2 weeks of school (what hours weren't already sacrificed to field trips, pre-K graduation, a spring singing assembly & a brunch in honor of the 2nd graders' truly mind blowing cardboard box city) frantically breaking thread & needles in a fruitless attempt to coax my late grandmother's 1929 Singer into joining yards of dark green nylon net to the wraparound tail shapes I'd cut (badly) from some fluorescent lime-colored, perforated "fabric" of unknown synthetic blend. Regrettably, Gran's sewing machine, while remarkably spry for a senior citizen, only recognizes materials dating back to its infancy, wool, cotton, flour sacks, stuff like that. I'd fooled myself into thinking this would be a piece of cake... not entirely without precedent, either. Back when I was making a hash of nearly every thing I touched at the costume warehouse (as featured in Job Hopper! Fellow slacker, it's not too late to post a (glowing) customer review on Amazon dot com... on company time, of course) I was assigned to stitch four gargantuan Bulls jerseys for the four gargantuan caryatids who support the west side of Chicago's Museum of Science & Industry. That's a lot of yardage. If was also the very same slinky, sporty, synthetic mesh I figured would drape attractively, allow for some circulation of air on a sweltering NYC summer day, and most importantly, stitch together as easily as the breeze... because the caryatids were a cinch! They just took a long

an EXCELLENT use of the tax payers' money

time because their 7th-cervical-vertebra-to-waist measurement exceeds the length of a city bus. But I was working with heavy-duty industrial equipment then. I wasn't emotionally invested & there were none of these pesky elves underfoot, demanding to try on semi-finished garments so poorly constructed they really had no business being touched at all. Plus, whenever Greg's out of town on an extended theatrical mission of utmost importance, Bitchmother settles in for a nice, long visit, and boy howdy is she cranky to be left holding the bag because let's not forget that Bitchmother has an actual degree in theatre unlike some she could name.

But, hey, you've got to go through it if you want to come out the other end, so slowly, slowly, by hook or by crook & mostly by hand, hunched over on the floor, seven Mer-costumes began to take shape for Inky & her 4 attendants, Milo & big ol' jiggle bellied me. The grown-up ladies who'd volunteered to go along to vouchsafe that no ill tidings would befall our party amid the sweaty, drunk, tit-crazed multitudes were on their own, costume-wise. Uncle Stephen had claimed that he was coming as a jellyfish, which gave rise to my claustrophobia as I imagined Stephen, basting in a last-minute dry-cleaning bag, procured on his way to the festivities... you bet I was on edge. So. WAS IT WORTH IT?

MAKE YOUR OWN MER-MAID CHECKLIST:
- fake pearls
- fake vines for seaweed
- slinky sport mesh, nylon net, & ribbon for wrap around tail-skirts
- bikini top... covered in kelp (optional)
- body glitter
- water bottle
- box lunch
- monkey-shaped bubble container/whistle on neck cord.
- more nylon net & ribbon (damnit!)
- SpongeBob SquarePants bags to carry lunch



The Home Seamstress in her lair, 2 a.m.

inky's 8th Birthday Mermaid Brigad

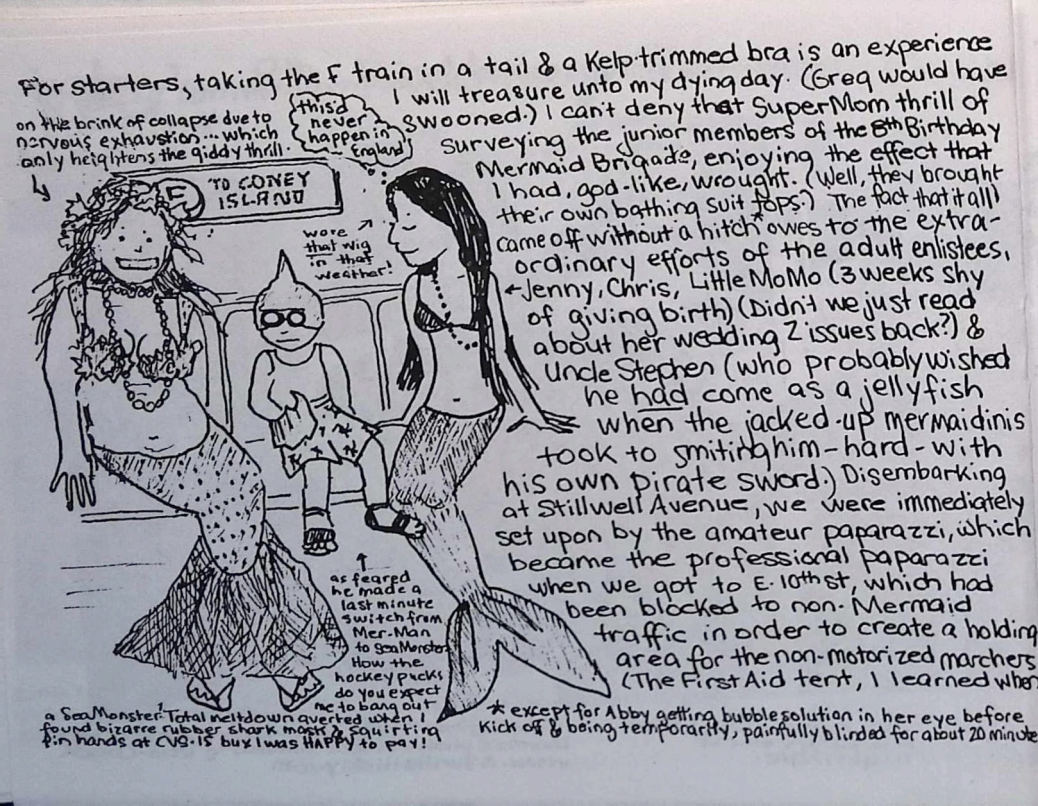
Little Mo Mo, Chris, Jenny, me & Uncle Stephen escorting Moie, Chloe, Inky, Abby & Milo, moments before making a spectacle of ourselves in the subway.

The squad leader her energy up with from a Surf Ave. g

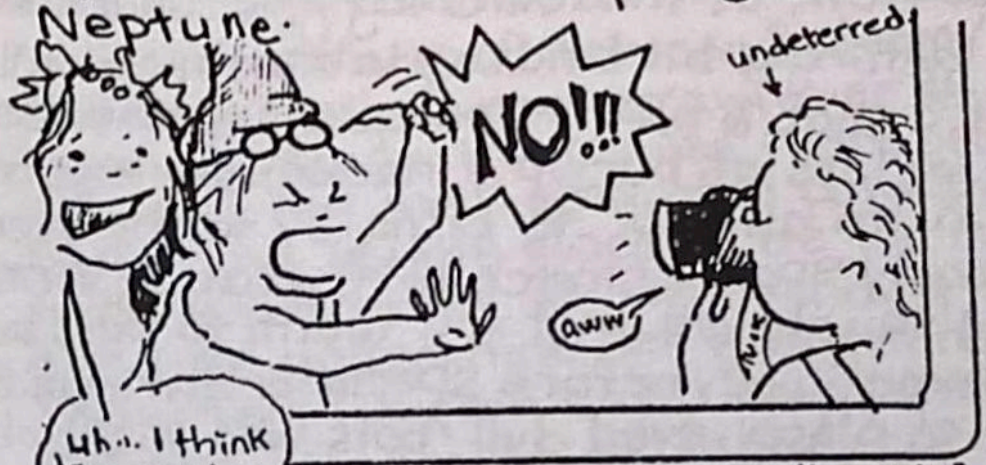
www.coneyislandusa.com/mermaid.shtml

This event would have been Greg's worst nightmare.

Webmaster Dave promises to post more Mermaid photos before summer's end. Check www.Ayunhalliday.com


For starters, taking the F train in a tail & a Kelp-trimmed bra is an experience I will treasure unto my dying day. (Greg would have swooned.) I can't deny that SuperMom thrill of surveying the junior members of the 8th Birthday Mermaid Brigade, enjoying the effect that I had, god-like, wrought. (Well, they brought their own bathing suit tops.) The fact that it all came off without a hitch* owes to the extraordinary efforts of the adult enlistees, Jenny, Chris, Little MoMo (3 weeks shy of giving birth) (Didn't we just read about her wedding 2 issues back?) & Uncle Stephen (who probably wished he had come as a jellyfish when the jacked-up mermaidinis took to smiting him - hard - with his own pirate sword.) Disembarking at Stillwell Avenue, we were immediately set upon by the amateur paparazzi, which became the professional paparazzi when we got to E. 10th st, which had been blocked to non-Mermaid traffic in order to create a holding area for the non-motorized marchers. (The First Aid tent, I learned when
on the brink of collapse due to nervous exhaustion... which only heightens the giddy thrill.
this'd never happen in England
TO CONEY ISLAND
wore that wig in that weather!
as feared he made a last minute switch from Mer-Man to SeaMonster. How the hockey pucks do you expect me to bang out
a SeaMonster. Total meltdown averted when I found bizarre rubber shark mask & squirting fin hands at CVS. IF buy I was HAPPY to pay!
* except for Abby getting bubble solution in her eye before Kick off & being temporarily, painfully blinded for about 20 minute

seeking relief for Little Bubble Eyes, was stationed at the other extreme of the boardwalk. Tant pis. She blinked herself into the clear by Kick-off, thank Neptune.

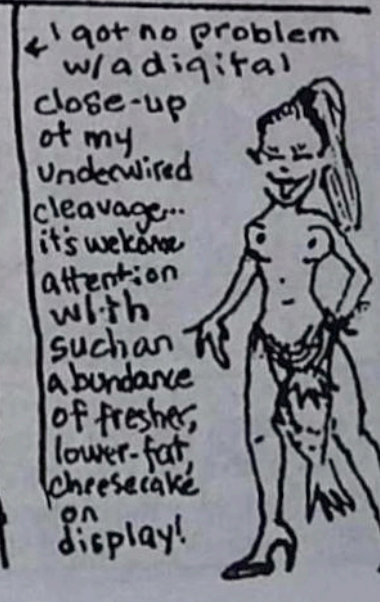


uh... I think he may be feeling a little photo-ed out right now.
uh, I'm still an exemplerary mother, right? He loves it! I swear! The shooters were also drawn to the red-eyed Abby, huddled
12
so! whose idea was it to celebrate your birthday at the Mermaid parade?
my... mom's?
Inky's 8th Mermaid

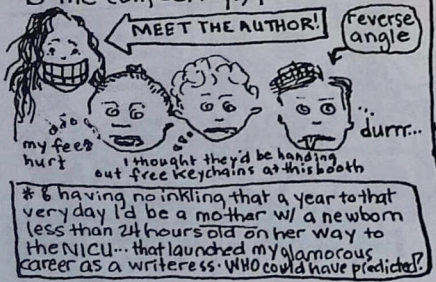
paparazzi memories

(For 3400 more photos of this event go to www.flickr.com & search on tags like 'Mermaid Parade'.

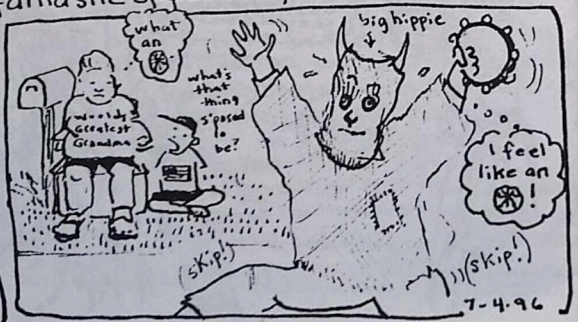
How does Chloe spell her last name!? The New York Times is asking & she's not sure!
She had these little fishstickers on her belly... that resulted in a lasting tattoo tan to dazzle the labor & delivery nurse


I got no problem w/ a digital close-up of my underwired cleavage... it's welcome attention with such an abundance of fresher, lower-fat cheesecake on display!

Because we had stacked our deck with both small children & a pregnant woman, we were bumped toward the front of the marching line which was fortunate because a) the girls were getting a bit Lindsay Lohan about all the media jackals begging them for a shot & b) prior parade experience (as some sort of spirit of the Forest w/ lots of burlap & inadequate eye holes, shaking a tambourine like an idiot in an attempt to bring joy to the over-it citizens populating (sort of) a particularly sparse stretch of the Cabot, Vermont Independence Day Parade route*) had taught me that you want to pass before the masses while they've still got some juice, before spectator fatigue sets in, transforming them into the sort of glassy-eyed dull 'bots who withhold even flickering interest unless your bare breasted D cups are painted metallic gold or you're giving away free Mardi Gras beads. (Speaking of my 'glamorous' career as a writeress' (read the footnote, for the love of Mike!) these same 'bots can really do a number on you at book fairs or other events allegedly offering authors a fantastic opportunity to pimp their work to the (unfeeling!) public.) That



* & having no inkling that a year to that very day I'd be a mother w/ a newborn less than 24 hours old on her way to the NICU... that launched my glamorous career as a writeress. WHO could have predicted?

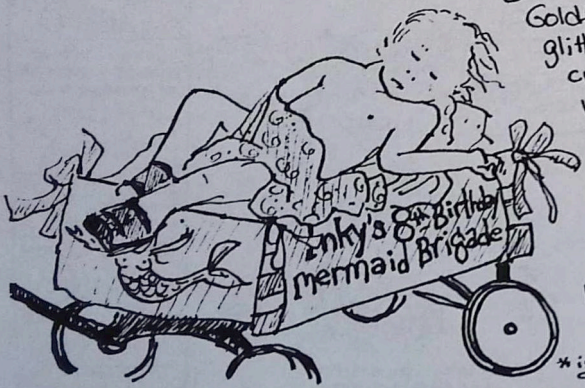


Knife can cut in both directions, by the way, as evidenced by the bedraggled riders on this year's Gay Pride Parade floats, logging the last few blocks of their long & steamy route. (See Fig 1-I through K) It felt at least 20 degrees awful-er than the previous day's Mermaid Parade but maybe that's because I was no longer wearing my well-ventilated polyester tail) Yeah, the beginning is the place to be for marchers & onlookers alike. By the time we were winding our way onto surf Ave., the under-nine set was getting, to quote Spiritual Midwifery (you can say it along with me!) "a bit complainy", wandering off to the margins to forage for the candies the group ahead of us was lobbing at the crowd, & subjecting their elders to some carless 'Are We There Yet!?" I can only give thanks that Milo crapped out midway down the boardwalk (& that some pre-event polling determined that we should most definitely borrow Chris' son Nicholas' wagon to haul water, purses, SpongeBob squarepants box lunches & other assorted detritus, like the birthday girl's photo-sensitive younger brother. A New York City kids

Chloe, speaking for the group.

MIDDLE-AGED GAY MEN'S ALLERGY TASK FORCE
FIG 1-I
BRONX LGTG FLUOROCARBON AWARENESS INITIATIVE
FIG 1-J
QUEER VISITING NURSES ASSOCIATION OF LONG ISLAND
FIG 1-K
finally! someone w/ the stamina required!

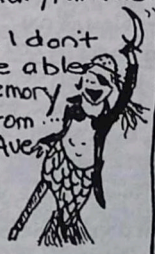
are historically pretty impressive when it comes to sleeping through car alarms, gun shots, opportunistic bums scrounging through the recycling bins for redeemables at 5am, the grinding gears of the garbage truck, drunken 20-somethings spilling out of the bars at last call, lively drivers' thumping bass lines, knock down drag out lovers' spats, etc. but Milo outdid himself by remaining unconscious even as crowds 10-deep crowed such bon mots as "HEY! IS THAT KID DEAD OR WHAT!?" (I'm kind of a wash in the nervous mother dept. but the sentiment* was sufficiently creepy that I checked for a pulse every time.) I can't deny a flush of maternal pride that my little boy started to syphon the photographic thunder away from the impressive deleqation to our stem, which included a middle-aged man in a diaper & an exquisite, augmented creature Goldfingered from the tips of her glittering pasties to the cascading curls of her Louis XIV wig. He would never have stood for all this shutterbuggery had he been awake. I think he deserves full credit for embellishing our humble construction paper trimmed storage wagon to such a point where we won 3rd place honors in the 'Best Push-Pull Cart' division. We got a medal in the



* issuing exclusively from jock-voiced, presumably childless males w/ brewskis in hand!

mail a couple of weeks later & I got a bit choked up in the good way that Inky's still little enough that she immediately put it around her neck, wearing it with pride everywhere she went for the next couple of days. We nabbed another bronze in the Best Marching Group category, which suggests to me that the judges (including this year's King, David Johannsen of New York Dolls fame) were either sentimentalists (giving lie to the rumor that the Mermaid Parade should belong exclusively to the strip show devotees & other long-time participants who resent the incursion of families with small, cute children) or drunk (as they themselves claim on the website). Plus, they sang Happy Birthday to Inky from the reviewing stand! (I'm going to go on a limb here & say that trumps my 8th birthday serenade which was delivered by a lunch shift's worth of styrofoam-boater-sporting waiters, at Farrell's, the Gay 90's theme chain restaurant in the Castleton Mall. ... wait... if I was in 2nd grade for Farrell's (which again, the hair in the snapshot confirms) that means the hand-crocheted slipper slumber party was an additional birthday party for non-school friends! ... indicating that Self-Sacrificing Maternal Birthday Observation Syndrome is hereditary, and nothing new.

The only downside is I don't reckon we'll ever be able to top this year's memory ... not that it'll stop me from ... pegleggging down Surf Ave in a grab bag of recent costumery. Ahoy, Mer-Maties! We sail June 24, 2006!



Mermaid Lena's dad Josh made good on my promise of ice cream ... which was sliming down to his elbow by the time he made it back to our post-March encampment on the Beach. THAT's how hot it was

Bastille Day 2005... or little MoMo joins the club

She's a nice sort of baby don't you think?

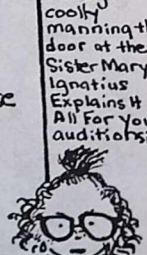
Outside of the immediate family,* no one has consumed more real estate in the pages of this magazine than LittleMoMo. She was present at the birth of Inky (memorably telephoning Mrs X midway through the 7hours of pushing to release her from her offered chauffeuring duties with the reassuring growl, "Don't worry, we're gonna' get this f*cker outa there!") & the East Village Inky (the original 1st 50 copies were Xeroxed after-hours at her day job.) We've covered everything from her wedding & her Mexican sunburn to her award-winning performance as Little Sally in Urinetown & her on-the-street purchase of a phone-shaped-purse that actually worked when plugged into a wall jack. And now, the moment you've all been waiting for (as has her 85-year-old father-in-law, who's pretty durn psyched to become a grandpa for the 1st time in his life)

* he counts.

But I get ahead of myself. The blessed event was estimated for August 1, which I, in my arrogance, ammended to August 15 or so (petite physique, first baby, more convenient schedule-wise from my point of view) I was glad to learn that Little MoMo's husband & impregnator Mr. Novatny* had signed on for the extension of A Light in the Piazza at Lincoln Center because it meant she'd be delivering a short subway ride away, relieving me of the expense of flying to LA, an extensive childcare debt to Greg, & most importantly, the anxiety that I wouldn't get there in time. We repaired to the summer palace

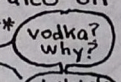
* erroneously identified as Mr Nowicki in E.V. Inky # 26 due to my wildly enthusiastic but not entirely accurate recall of his performance in Election, which we should really all rent again one of these days.

not to keep harping on this! who could have foreseen jazz but who could've foreseen that 18 years & some (name) changelater, I'd witness a baby emerging from the hindquarters of the be-spectacled freshman stage manageress coolly manning the door at the Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You auditions?



in Cape Cod on June 30. On July 5, MoMo called to report that she was 2 cm dilated & her ob was wagering she was but one weekly pre-natal visit shy of becoming a mother. Which kind of seemed like cause for an ulcer on my end.

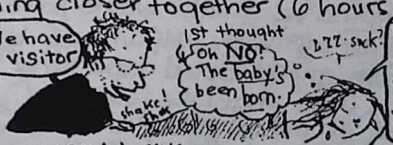
Okay... uh... I'll start looking into the bus schedule.* You start drinking vodka!**



It can stave off contractions. Really. It's in spiritual Midwifery. Midwives are always telling people to drink vodka.

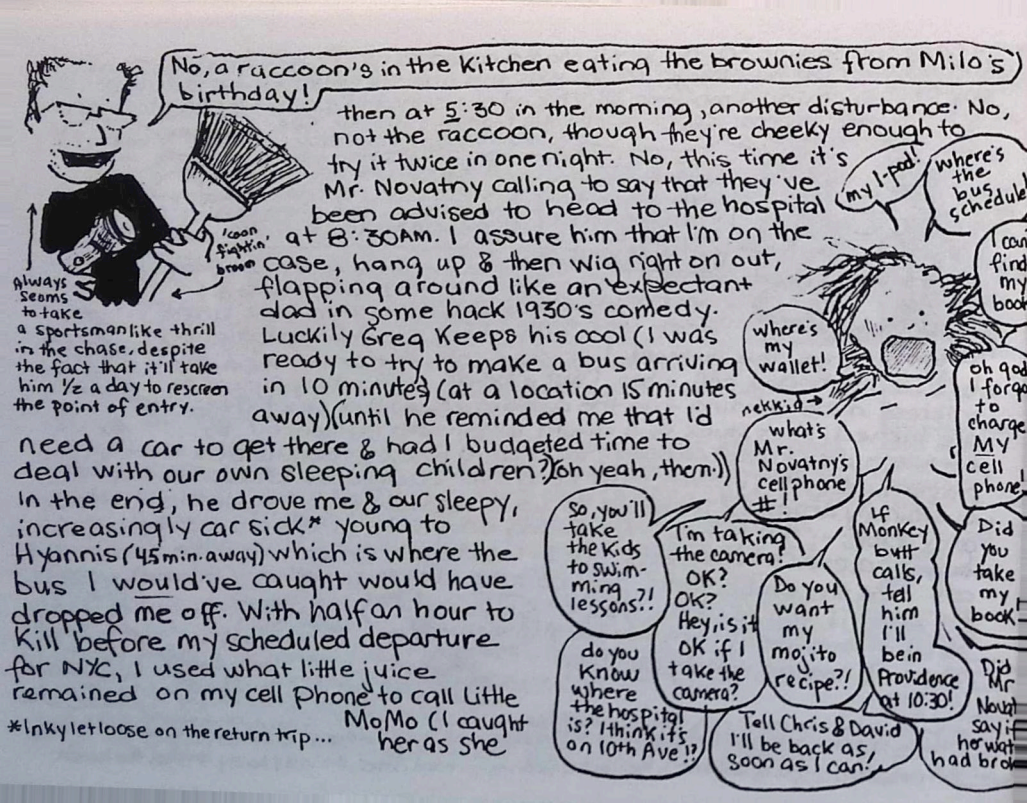
I think I'd rather just let nature take its course...

I had the home court advantage back in 1997 when MoMo & I lived 3 blocks apart & she, a childless single female, was willingly at my full gestational disposal from the moment I crossed into the Zone (She'd also been at my beck & call when I was a bride, exhibiting far more interest in the wedding than the groom.) Now that the tables are turned, she's stuck w/ a doula who's unduly influenced by the NYC public school calendar, the chock-a block schedule of a work-a-holic playwright (who, in turn, must bend over backwards to accomodate the seemingly arbitrary meetings set up or rescheduled by producers, directors, and actors... not to mention being on call to single parent it & entertain whatever housequests are in residence. Should his wife get the call that the contractions are coming closer together (6 hours away by car... if you don't hit traffic in CT or outside of Providence.)) Then at approximately 3am, July 14

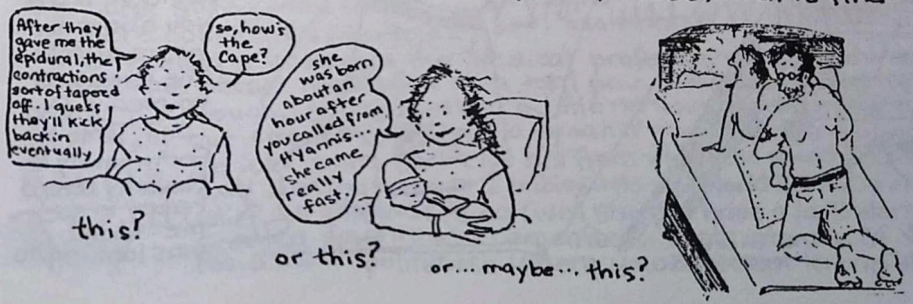

We have a visitor
1st thought
Oh NO! The baby's been born.
Did Chris & David decide to drive straight through instead of stopping in CT?
shake shake

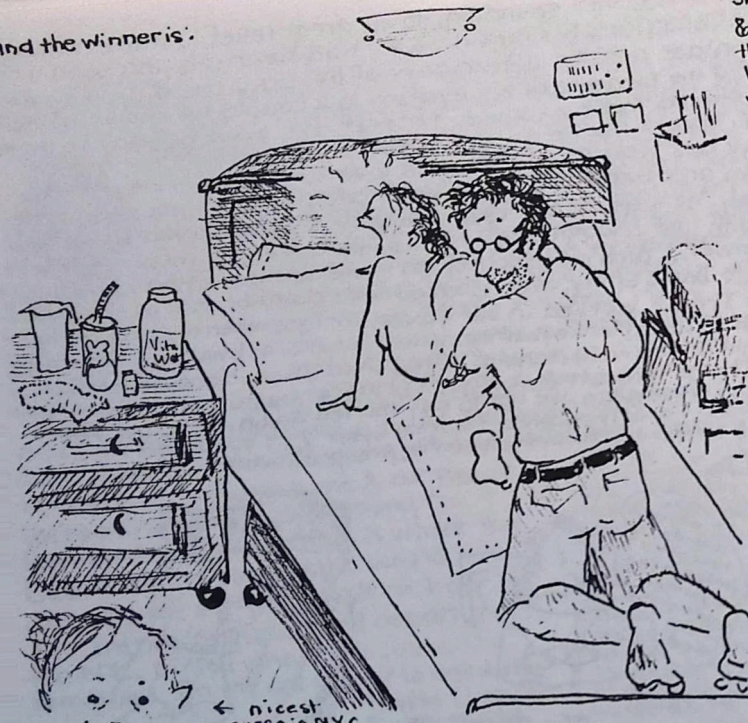
*because I'm too much of a Fraidy to drive in or even into NYC & also, how would Greg & the Kids procure food, liquor & the N.Y. Times during my absence if I stole their wheels.

**despite a couple of Mojitos in Mexico & a fondness for hard cides, the lady barely touches the hooch.


No, a raccoon's in the kitchen eating the brownies from Milo's birthday!
'coon fightin' armor
Always seems to take a sportsmanlike thrill in the chase, despite the fact that it'll take him ½ a day to rescreen the point of entry.
then at 5:30 in the morning, another disturbance. No, not the raccoon, though they're cheeky enough to try it twice in one night. No, this time it's Mr. Novatny calling to say that they've been advised to head to the hospital at 8:30AM. I assure him that I'm on the case, hang up & then wig right on out, flapping around like an expectant dad in some hack 1930's comedy. Luckily Greg keeps his cool (I was ready to try to make a bus arriving in 10 minutes (at a location 15 minutes away) until he reminded me that I'd need a car to get there & had I budgeted time to deal with our own sleeping children? (oh yeah, them.))
In the end, he drove me & our sleepy, increasingly car sick* young to Hyannis (45 min. away) which is where the bus I would've caught would have dropped me off. With half an hour to kill before my scheduled departure for NYC, I used what little juice remained on my cell phone to call Little MoMo (I caught her as she
*Inky let loose on the return trip...
my I-pod!
where's the bus schedule!
I can't find my book!
where's my wallet!
oh god I forgot to charge MY cell phone!
next kid →
what's Mr. Novatny's cell phone #!
So, you'll take the kids to swimming lessons?!
I'm taking the camera! OK? OK? Hey, is it OK if I take the camera?
Do you want my mojito recipe?!
If Monkey butt calls, tell him I'll be in Providence at 10:30!
Did you take my book!
do you know where the hospital is? I think it's on 10th Ave!?
Tell Chris & David I'll be back as soon as I can!
Did Mr Novatny say if he was hurt had broke

was strolling to the hospital, sounding, to my great relief, just like normal) and Uncle Monkeybutt (He & his rental car had been staying with us at the Summer palace until the afternoon of the previous day, when we reluctantly sacrificed the pleasure of his company to a couple he knows in Providence RI. He'd offered that he would forfeit his own holiday to drive me down to NY, should MoMo go into labor when he was our guest. Now, because my bus had a half-hour layover in Providence, I was willing to give him an extension on his fabulous, limited time offer (don't delay!)) Remarkably, he slept off the champagne he'd been served by his hosts the night before with just enough time to pick up the half dozen messages I'd left since sunrise, shower, & grab some scones en route to the station. (Some nib-tipping going out to Dan & Emily, who released their claim on him much earlier than scheduled) Traffic worked in our favor. At 1:35, when we paid the toll for the Triborough Bridge, Monkeybutt remarked, "wouldn't it be great if the baby was being born right at this very minute?" What!? NO! Then, because the Triborough Bridge (the way we took it anyway) takes you to melon farming LA GUARDIA instead of Manhattan, we got to pay the toll again, heading back the way we'd come, at 1:54. I nearly swooned. Shortly after 2, I sprinted into St Lukes-Roosevelt & barged into the birthing center, unsure of what I'd find.


After they gave me the epidural, the contractions sort of tapered off. I guess they'll kick back in eventually
so, how's the Cape?
she was born about an hour after you called from Hyannis... she came really fast.
this?
or this?
or... maybe... this?



She was fully dilated & had been slogging through the dreaded back labor since I was back around Falls River Junction! (I'd been pounding on the birthing center's door for like 5 min, when the o.b. happened to pass by. For a few seconds, it looked like she was going to deny me entry. "We could've used you about 4 hours ago," she remarked pointedly. (No shit, Tonto.) Fortunately, Mr. Novatny seemed happy to see me. MoMo was looking, to

use the phrase she applied to me back on July 3, 1997 'like an animal'. I've heard tell of women who labor silently, like Dustin Hoffman's wife in 'Little Big Man' but MoMo wasn't one of them, nor for that matter was I. We're more of the water buffalo school, I believe.

That agonized lowing was a real nostalgia trip for me, especially since I'd spent much of the previous day, Milo's 5th birthday, recalling the events of his birth. (see E.V. Inky #9) Without giving it a 2nd thought, I joined right in, matching her bellow for bellow. It just seemed like the thing to do.

Before long our duet became a trio as Mr. Novatny added his voice to the mournful wails of us laboring ladies. It was a Spiritual Midwifery hippie fantasy even if we weren't in a macramé-festooned school bus. I caught the nurse smiling at the scene we were causing. It's always a warm feeling to know that the medical professional randomly assigned to your case doesn't regard you as a total pain in the ayuss. After a while though, I started getting a little nervous that maybe all of our empathetic gruntin' & a-groanin' might be casting Little Mo Mo into some Sartrean hell from which she could find no exit. Having brought 2 babies into the world sans pain relief, as she was doing (well, she did have a lavender-scented washrag), I remembered both intervals of residual politeness where you don't want to hurt the

all together now! aaahhhhhhwWWuNNNghh....

had a home birth in Bloomington Indiana!

labor support team's feelings by shouting at them to shut their idiotic yaps and long periods when it's impossible to communicate anything verbally (or otherwise) to the insensitive aliens who aren't being blasted apart by the unrelenting waves of white hot pain. On the other hand, I didn't want to bother her w/ unnecessary questions or pleas for reassurance at a time like this. MoMo's pretty good at slipping a sardonic comment in when the situation warrants (Despite her predicament, she did scrape together enough of her non-labor & - delivery persona to inquire of the nurse between contractions, "So what's our E.T.A. here?") I guess in the end it's sort of like buying someone a present. You think about what you think they might like, and if that doesn't yield a definitive suggestion, you think about what you'd like, and then you mush the 2 together & hope for the best. (only difference is, there's no re-gifting) It felt to me like we were sailing progressively toward our destination, so I reckoned it was okay to keep doin' what came naturally. Besides, it seemed like another person would be joining us soon (two if you count the o.b. who, true to the reputation that had appealed to MoMo, was practicing a hands-off approach out in the hallway.) The others seemed to have the back forty pretty well covered so I stayed up near the head of the bed, applying cool compresses, offering liquid

refreshment & getting the beejaysus squeezed out of my mitts. It kind of broke my heart to notice how tiny MoMo's hands are. She's so little*, small enough to shop in the boys' dept., to play a child in Urinetown. Her hands seem closer to Inky's than to mine & it struck me as a raw deal that she was having to endure this sort of mind blowing torture. (How on earth did the Victorians withstand it?)

But then there started to be all this physical evidence of imminence ~ bulging, gushing, glooping, gaping ~ all dutifully reported to Little MoMo, & later, at around midnight (9pm L.A. time!) to MoMo's bosom friend & wife. Denise, who is one of the most hip & hilarious & SQUEAMISH people I've ever had the pleasure of ~~traumatizing~~ with gnarly gynecological details. (see Fig 1-L and M) Those of us who weren't in labor were getting pretty giddy & baby crazy & it seemed like a lot of the information we were babbling about wasn't quite making it back to the motherships. She was concentrating on panting fast & high in between pushes, as instructed by her o.b. And then all of a sudden this little head blorps out, opens one eye, takes a breath & starts to cry!

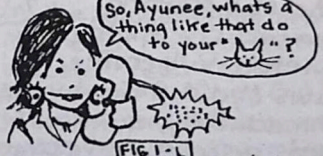


FIG 1-L

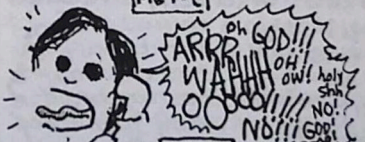
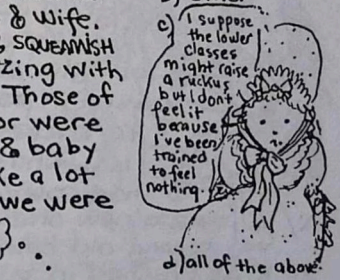


FIG 1-M

* & one day may be again.

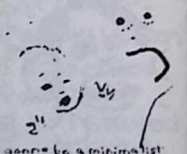
a) laudinum
b) ether
c) "I suppose the lower classes might raise a ruckus but I don't feel it because I've been trained to feel nothing."
d) all of the above



the surrounding area blank. That'll save me having to draw the dr's hands!

in deference to Denise's delicate sensibilities & acknowledgment of my limitations as an artist im just going to leave

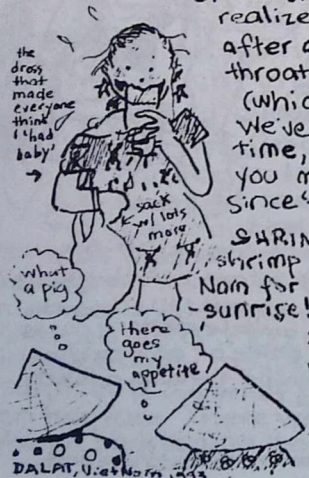
Even this did not seem to compute to the bigger head of this temporarily 2-headed creature, pressed as it was into a sweaty pillow. The ob was issuing what seemed to me fairly clear commands along the lines of "Reach down" & "bring your hands toward me now", but MoMo, still falling down the rabbit hole didn't seem clear enough on her coordinates to understand what was being asked of her. Before there was time to explain, this greased-up football of human tissue comes rocketing up under MoMo's belly, the doc having executed a beautiful pass as the shoulders etc. started flopping out. I could see that MoMo wasn't in position to receive, so I reached out to bucket brigade the little pitcher up to his ma. (who still wasn't catching) The ob's greeting had cowed me enough that I feared she might chew me a new one for touching this completely vulnerable, 2-second-old being with my ungloved paws (I did swing by the sink as I rushed in, but still… a bus.) so I immediately, guiltily re-deposited this prize on the sheet, wiping my hands discreetly on a combination of bedding and pants. Simultaneously, MoMo snapped out of it & discovered her baby & it was just indescribably moving to see the expression of surprise & disbelief & confusion & excitement on her face. There was much rejoicing & I sort of faded back against the nightstand (actually a medical



supply drawer, which given the circumstances was not the most convenient location to be blocking w/ my big, old heiner) because 3 is a magic number & it was a privilege to spectate as Little MoMo & Mr. Novatny greeted their son for the 1st time. Grandparents were notified as was Uncle MonKeybutt, who hotfooled it back to the hospital to meet Haskell, as this freshly decanted morsel of human flesh was immediately named, after his paternal grandfather (a Russian Jewish D-lyer whose 1st gig in his adopted Texas homeland was selling bananas out of a pushcart.) While Haskell's father was escorting his hobbling ma to her 1st date with the perineal squeeze bottle, I got to soak up some of his newborn deliciousness* in the thoughtfully provided rocking chair, which is where I noticed that one edge of his hospital bracelet read 'ACE'. I was very gratified, upon my return to Cape Cod to learn that his parents had deemed this a better middle name than either of the reigning contenders on their list (Grasshopper or "Bob") Joined by baby shower hostess Louise & oldest Uncle-san Michael, we hung out 'til 8 o'dock, wolfing down delivery from Zen Palate, maxing out our memory cards & generally behaving waymore boisterously than is polite or advisable around someone whose mutilated Oranajna is burning through a lunch box full of frozen maxi-pads brought from home.

*he weighs about the same as Jambo & is much more compliant in the cuddling dept.

For 8 years (commencing shortly after I made coconut shrimp for me, Greg & Little MoMo, then went into labor) Greg was "allergic" to shrimp. This was a crying shame for several reasons, one of which is that it always made carry-out Thai food a testy time for us as a couple because Mr. OrangeBeef Pad Thai w/Chicken likes to share & this was an impossibility w/ me recognizing Pad Grapow as a rare chance to shrimp it up like the good ol' days (see Fig 1-N) & also, man that's 8 years of crustacean goodness wasted when Greg realized that he WASn't allergic to shrimp after an hors d'oeuvre failed to make his throat close. Maybe he's allergic to MSG (which doesn't bode well for Chinatown). We've spent the summer making up for lost time, doubly delightful since I read that you may as well use frozen cooked shrimp since 'fresh' shrimp is really defrosted frozen!



SHRIMP BANH MI – this tastes just like the non-shrimp versions I used to chow down on in Viet Nam for like 25¢ apiece beginning shortly after sunrise!

1 large carrot, grated } let em get to know
2 T sushi rice vinegar } each other

1/3 C chopped cilantro
2 1/2 T mayo
2 1/2 T yogurt
3/4 t fish sauce
1 T lime juice
1/4 t cayenne
} SAUCE ← (if there was ever an inappropriate substance I'd love to swill from a bucket, this is it.)

FIG 1-N my father's friend Gov Connelly entertained frequently & seemed not to mind when I Hoovered up sixty bucks worth of shrimp cocktail. I guess it's always gratifying when a picky eater eats hardy – speaking of which, what's Inky's deal that she refuses to consider shrimp the treat I did!?

SHRIMP BANH MI (cont'd)

Get a 3ft. long baguette or some shorties. They're supposed to be fresh but if your whole inspiration for making this dish is using up some leftover loaf of French bread, old ma Toaster Oven will cover for you.

- Slice 'em in half lengthwise
- Slather 'em with that SAUCE
- Thaw 1lb of frozen shrimp (cook it if it isn't already), take their tail-po's off & toss 'em in the remaining sauce. (Assuming you ain't gurzled it all.)
- Pave the lower halves of the baguettes with the carrot condiment.
- Layer the shrimp on next.
- Slice half a cuke thin & layer THAT on.
- Slice 3 scallions into lengthwise slivers & distribute as you see fit.
- Slam the lid on & don't skimp on the napkins.

Enough for 6 portions.

frozen, cooked shrimp! defrost in like 5 min, just put 'em in a bowl under the tap under a trickle of cold H²O

SHRIMP & CORN SALAD

~this replicates the only dish I could stand (actually I loved it obsessively) from this unappetizing-looking local pasta (blech) joint w/ poorly spongepainted purple walls.

Wash, dry & combine (& bite-size-ify):
- 2 heads Boston lettuce
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped.

Heat 2T olive oil in a large skillet over med. heat

Add:
- 2C frozen or fresh corn
- 1 diced, seeded jalapeno

cook, stirring, for 5 min. til corn looks toasted

Add 1½ lb cooked shrimp & give it a twirl. Remove from heat.

Whisk the first 4 ingredients together, then slowly whisk in the oil to make DRESSING. Add Sea salt & fresh ground pepper.
- ¼C red onion, diced
- 3T lime juice
- 2t honey
- ½t fish sauce
- ¼C olive oil

Put 2T of it on the shrimp mixture & toss well. Put the rest of it on the greens & toss them. Now put the shrimp on the greens. If you want to feel really groovy about everything, wrap it up in warm tortillas. Dude!

Mango basil SHRIMP

toss & refrigerate for half an hour.
- 1lb thawed shrimp
- ¼t salt
- ½t cayenne
- ¼t turmeric

Then cook over med heat in 1T olive oil for like, a minute. Add 1 mango (deboned & cut into cubes), 1 bunch of scallion greens (sliced) & ¼C fresh basil (chopped). Cook for one more min. then serve on brown rice. Refuse to believe the kids hate it because 'everyone loves it'

advice to the fathers as overheard by Greg KOTIS

"DINOSAUR CHOCOLATE MILK TRAGEDY"

I'm going to eat you.
No! Don't eat me!
Okay, I'm just going to eat some of your meat because I'm hungry
okay.
Mmm Ymm Hrmm Snrk!!! Good meat. Crkksmmmpphht.
Hey! Don't eat my bones!
No, they're too crunch ymmmrrmm.
Because I need my bones to stand up & milk is very good for your body.
Ymmmrrmm My mama lets me drink chocolate milk sometimes Rrrrmmrr.
I never get to drink chocolate milk. Never never never never never.
Mmm fr mm.
MADE IN CHINA